Engagement Outcomes Report: Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026-2030

Summary report

Introduction

Council undertook comprehensive engagement between 2 October and 3 November 2025 to inform the development of the next Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) 2026-2030.

The engagement explored 2 key questions: 1) **areas for improvement** and 2) **priorities for the next 4 years**.

These questions were asked across 4 focus areas:

1. Attitudes and Behaviours
2. Liveable Communities
3. Meaningful Employment
4. Systems and Processes.

The 4 focus areas are mandated by the New South Wales State Government.

We heard from Council staff and a diversity of community members, including First Nations, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), women, children representatives, gender and sexually diverse (or LGBTIQA+), seniors, carers, interested community members, Council staff and people with lived experience of disability, including psychosocial, physical, cognitive, neurodivergent, deaf and visual impairment.

Feedback from the community was gathered through a combination of in-person community sessions (focus groups, workshops, interviews and pop-up events) and the Your Say online survey. The Access Committee was engaged through a workshop, and staff feedback was gathered via a workshop and survey.

In total, 230 people participated:



Participants included 64 people with lived experience of disability, 25 carers, 40 service providers, 33 seniors, 28 interested community members and 27 Council staff.

This report presents a summary of findings for each focus area, taking into account all feedback received.

Community feedback (in-person and Your Say)

Focus area 1: Attitudes and Behaviours

Areas for improvement

- **Stigma, bias, and understanding**
  Respondents emphasise the ongoing impact of stigma and exclusion, particularly for people with invisible disabilities and those who are neurodivergent. Carers also report feeling overlooked, highlighting the need for broader recognition of diverse disability experiences and support roles.
- **Communication and accessibility**
  Uncertainty among some service providers on how to offer support and instances of disrespect by some businesses toward people with disability suggest that accessibility requires both practical adjustments and improved awareness. Members of the deaf

community describe continued communication barriers, including inconsistent access to interpreters and captions.

- **Safety and intersectionality**
  Safety concerns, especially in relation to antisocial behaviour, are raised alongside experiences of intersectional stigma. Participants note that disability combined with other identity factors, such as accent, can intensify exclusion.
- **Institutional capacity and collaboration**
  Feedback underscores the need for stronger institutional capability and culturally responsive practice, including deeper partnerships with Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations and more inclusive employment services.

Summary reflection
Overall, the feedback indicates that advancing inclusion depends on strengthening understanding, communication, safety and collaborative practice across organisations and services.

Community priorities

- **Education and awareness**
  Participants call for mandatory disability and inclusion training across staff and contractors, complemented by public awareness initiatives. They further highlight a need to embed lived experience learning within early childhood settings and schools to foster understanding from an early age.
- **Visibility and accessible communication**
  Respondents stress the importance of promoting positive narratives and making inclusion more visible in community life. Practical measures such as adopting recognisable inclusion symbols and strengthening accessible communication, including plain language, interpreters, captions and Auslan, are seen as key enablers of participation.
- **Empowerment, partnerships, and belonging**
  The feedback underscores the value of supporting self-advocacy and leadership among people with disability. Participants advocate for deeper partnerships with First Nations and multicultural communities, alongside the creation of safe, welcoming social spaces that encourage connection and belonging.

Summary reflection

Overall, the priorities reflect a shared aspiration for a community where inclusion is actively demonstrated through education, representation, accessible communication and opportunities for leadership and engagement.

Focus area 2: Liveable and safer communities

Areas for improvement

- **Public spaces and amenities**
  Participants report limited availability and reliability of accessible toilets, alongside concerns about cleanliness, safety and locked facilities. Insufficient shade, seating and inconsistent provision of inclusive play equipment reduce comfort and participation in parks and recreational areas.
- **Transport and mobility**
  Accessibility across transport services is described as uneven, with issues such as ramps not being deployed, lift outages and unsafe or poorly lit stops. Confusing or inconsistent audio-visual information further limits independent travel, while community bus services are perceived as inefficient.
- **Pedestrian connectivity**
  Respondents highlight gaps in the pedestrian network, including uneven or missing footpaths, inadequate kerb ramps and short crossing times. Hazards near stations and busy intersections are seen as ongoing risks to safe movement.
- **Buildings and recreation facilities**
  Barriers within buildings and leisure venues include restricted access to toilets, limited ramps, narrow pathways and difficulties entering pools. Community halls, shops and aquatic facilities are noted as areas requiring improvement.
- **Safety and emergency preparedness**
  Concerns centre on poor lighting and the adequacy of evacuation procedures, particularly in high-rise settings or during lift failures. Toilet security is also raised as a safety issue.
- **Urban development and growth**
  Rapid development and airport expansion are perceived as progressing without consistent integration of access and inclusion

considerations. Respondents also emphasise the importance of advocating for affordable and disability-appropriate housing.

- **Programs and events**
  Participants describe limited access to clear accessibility information for events, as well as challenges related to crowding, terrain and sensory environments. Suggested improvements include mechanisms to communicate access needs in advance, accessible site maps and sensory-friendly spaces.
- **Wellbeing and support services**
  Feedback highlights long wait times and funding pressures in mental health services, alongside cost barriers for supports such as hydrotherapy. Respondents note that psychosocial disability needs, including those of First Nations people, are often insufficiently recognised.

Summary reflection
Overall, the feedback underscores the importance of embedding accessibility, safety and inclusion consistently across infrastructure, planning, community programs and support systems to enable equitable participation and wellbeing.

Community priorities

- **Accessible buildings and facilities**
  Participants prioritise upgrades that remove everyday barriers within public and recreational venues. Key areas include improved ramps, footpaths, lifts, accessible toilets and easier pool entry, alongside greater consideration of sensory-friendly design. Affordability is also raised, with suggestions to review venue hire costs to ensure equitable access.
- **Safe and inclusive public spaces**
  Respondents advocate for parks and open spaces that support a wider range of needs. Priorities include enhanced inclusive equipment, adult change facilities, clearer signage and increased shade, seating and sheltered areas. Consistent enforcement of accessible parking provisions is viewed as essential.
- **Transport and pedestrian access**
  Accessible and reliable mobility remains a central concern. Participants highlight the need for advocacy around accessible

buses, safer shelters and staff training, as well as upgrades to footpaths, crossings and designated parking bays to support independent travel.

- **Accessible community events**
  Feedback underscores the importance of events that are designed with accessibility from the outset. Respondents identify interpreters, captions, sensory-friendly spaces, accessible registration processes, clear maps and trained support staff as key enablers of participation.
- **Programs, services, and connection**
  Participants emphasise expanding inclusive social and recreational opportunities to strengthen community connection. Suggestions include exploring a centralised disability "One Stop Shop," alongside increased family supports and early intervention pathways.
- **Emergency preparedness and safety**
  Clear, accessible evacuation procedures and visible safety information are identified as priorities. Respondents call for alignment with best practice and improved signage to ensure safety measures are understandable and inclusive.

Summary reflection
Overall, the priorities centre on creating environments and experiences where accessibility, affordability, safety, and connection are consistently considered, enabling fuller participation for people with disability and their families.

Focus area 3: Meaningful employment

Areas for improvement

- **Workplace culture and fair treatment**
  Participants report ongoing experiences of stigma and discrimination, alongside concerns about the risks associated with disclosing disability. Issues such as unfair dismissals, underpayment and unsuitable job design — including within supported employment contexts — indicate a need for stronger safeguards and more consistent workplace adjustments.
- **Recruitment and hiring practices**
  Barriers within recruitment processes are described as a significant

obstacle. Inflexible application systems, interviews and job trials are seen as disadvantaging candidates, particularly those who are neurodivergent. Respondents also note that caring responsibilities can limit participation in standard hiring pathways.

- **Employer awareness and capability**
  Feedback points to gaps in employer understanding of available funding and supports, including access to interpreters and assistive technologies. Participants emphasise the value of ongoing check-ins and tailored support to ensure adjustments remain effective over time.
- **Employment pathways and opportunities**
  Respondents identify underemployment and limited access to meaningful roles, particularly for Deaf jobseekers. Concerns include narrow employment service offerings, a shortage of entry-level paid opportunities and challenges in recognising overseas qualifications. The need for stronger re-entry support following career interruptions is also raised.

Summary reflection
Overall, the feedback underscores the importance of fostering inclusive recruitment, improving employer capability, strengthening protections and broadening employment pathways to support fair and sustainable workforce participation.

- Top of Form

- Bottom of Form

Community priorities

- **Inclusive employment and leadership**
  Respondents prioritise recruitment approaches that are welcoming to neurodiverse candidates and promote equitable representation. There is a call for greater transparency, including reporting on Council's employment of people with disability, alongside recognition programs that celebrate and promote inclusive employers.
- **Employer education and partnerships**
  Participants highlight the importance of sustained disability inclusion training for employers, with a focus on reasonable adjustments and more flexible interview processes. Partnerships with Deaf and

disability organisations are seen as key to improving understanding and embedding practical, workplace-ready solutions.

- **Jobs, skills, and confidence building**
  Feedback underscores the need for accessible, community-based employment supports, including services delivered through Council and libraries. Respondents advocate for stronger local networks that connect people to job opportunities, support self-employment and micro-skills development and explore incentives or fee relief to reduce participation barriers.

Summary reflection
Overall, the priorities centre on creating an employment ecosystem where inclusive hiring, informed employers, and accessible supports work together to expand opportunities and strengthen workforce participation.

Focus area 4: Systems and processes

Areas for improvement

- **Responsiveness and transparency**
  Participants report frustration with delays and unclear updates, particularly regarding changes such as facility closures. Administrative complexity is perceived as burdensome, with a clear preference for more regular consultation and visible communication about decisions and timelines.
- **Role clarity and community outreach**
  Respondents note confusion about Council's responsibilities and available supports. There is a call for broader, more inclusive outreach strategies to better engage isolated residents, families, and multicultural communities who may be less connected to existing channels.
- **Communication and digital accessibility**
  Feedback points to challenges navigating the Council website and lengthy phone systems. Participants emphasise the need for plain English, easy-read and translated materials, alongside a balanced approach that maintains both digital and in-person service options. Suggested improvements include SMS reminders and clearer accessibility details for events, programs and services.

- **Development and planning processes**
  Respondents encourage stronger incentives to embed inclusion within development applications, ensuring accessibility is consistently treated as a core planning consideration rather than an afterthought.
- **Accessible services and information**
  Participants highlight the value of initiatives such as communication access accreditation and clearer visibility of MLAK facilities. Additional priorities include improved connections between Council and NDIS/local services, streamlined disability parking permit processes, accessible feedback mechanisms for non-digital users, and increased awareness of the Access Committee's role.

Summary reflection
Overall, the feedback underscores the need for clearer communication, more transparent processes, and consistently accessible services to enhance trust, understanding, and equitable participation.

Community priorities

- **Responsive and accessible service delivery**
  Participants prioritise the availability of multiple contact channels — including SMS, email, phone and face-to-face options — supported by faster response times. There is a call for regular audits of systems and websites, alongside redesign efforts that incorporate plain English, easy-read and audio formats. Suggested enhancements include live chat, SMS notifications, interpreter access, voice search functionality, translated key information and clearer signage supported by intuitive icons.
- **Communication and community engagement**
  Respondents highlight the importance of clearly promoting available accessibility supports, such as interpreters and captions, to encourage participation. Hybrid engagement options, proactive reminders, and accessible facility maps are seen as practical enablers. Participants also advocate for co-design approaches to systems and forms, and for greater visibility of the Access Committee to strengthen community awareness and trust.
- **Planning and inclusive governance**
  Feedback underscores the need to embed accessibility more firmly

within planning and development processes. Participants suggest exploring incentives for fully inclusive development applications and involving the Access Committee in reviewing accessibility elements of significant proposals. There is also support for information sessions that clarify Council roles, priorities and improvements. Collaboration with partners, including organisations such as Deaf Connect, is viewed as essential to ensuring decisions are guided by lived experience.

Summary reflection

Overall, the priorities centre on creating Council processes and services that are easier to navigate, visibly inclusive and informed by ongoing dialogue with the community.

Council staff feedback

Focus area 1: Attitudes and behaviours

Areas for improvement

- Feedback indicates training and staff capability gaps, with a need to progress from moderate to higher levels of inclusion across the workplace environment and service delivery.

Council priorities

- Staff identify a need to expand training and mentoring on accessibility, inclusion, and AS1428-related legislation and to embed inclusion within staff development, onboarding and workplace culture, including sharing lived experience to strengthen practice and continuing Diversity and Inclusion initiatives and engagement with the Access Committee.

Focus area 2: Liveable and safer communities

Areas for improvement

- Feedback indicates infrastructure limitations, including outdated facilities and physical constraints, as well as cost and funding pressures, uneven accessibility across services, and the need for

more proactive planning and application of universal design.

Council priorities

- Staff highlight the need to clarify the provision of all-abilities infrastructure (such as Changing Places facilities) and to budget for lifecycle costs, invest in inclusive facilities, recreation spaces and meeting venues (including accessible toilets and pedestrian access), and apply universal design principles in capital works and refurbishments by integrating accessibility early in planning and design to support DDA compliance, align consultant briefs and respond to changing community needs.

Focus area 3: Meaningful employment

Areas for improvement

- Staff rated internal services as moderately accessible and inclusive, with barriers including training gaps, technology limitations, engagement challenges and resource and time constraints.

Council priorities

- There is need to strengthen internal capability through training, awareness, and practical tools for accessible service delivery and to align actions with the DIAP to support more inclusive recruitment practices and workplace processes.

Focus area 4: Systems and processes

Areas for improvement

- Feedback reveals communication and information sharing as the primary area for improvement, with additional complexity arising from technology limitations and policy or legislative requirements.

Council priorities

- Opportunities include ensuring plain language, clear layout, appropriate colour contrast and accessible formats across internal and external communications; improving the accessibility of

websites, customer service portals and training through regular checks; and providing consistent information about accessible facilities, transport and event details in line with inclusive event guidance
- Embedding accessibility in policy development, project planning and decision-making is also identified as important, including aligning projects with the DIAP, maintaining feedback and consultation processes and involving people with lived experience in co-design.
- Opportunities also include supporting implementation through dedicated resourcing, such as funding for programs supporting children, young people, families and people with disability, procurement from disability-owned or led services, expanding initiatives such as the Inclusive Foundations Pilot, and securing ongoing dedicated budgets.

Next steps

Community feedback has helped shape the actions in the draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026–2030. The plan will be finalised after the public exhibition period, in line with Council's role in improving access and inclusion:

- **Planner:** understanding community needs and expectations now and into the future and planning to harness growth and investment to deliver positive community outcomes for all
- **Provider:** of inclusive programs, services, facilities, infrastructure and events
- **Partner:** harnessing collective resources of many to meet the challenges of the City
- **Advocate:** who promotes the needs of people living with disability to other agencies and authorities
- **Capacity builder:** developing relationships, sharing learnings and building skills with the local community sector, local employers and major industries
- **Regulator:** monitoring compliance with conditions set out in our

Development Control Plan and other legislation.

Following Council approval, the draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026-2030 will be on public exhibition. The final document will be presented to Council for consideration and endorsement in June/July 2026.

Enquiries

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